DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 403 SO 013 768

AUTHOR Kane, Tony
TITLE An Introduction to Chinese Literature.
INSTITUTION Michigan Univ., Ann Arbor. Project on East Asian Studies in Education.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 54p.; For related documents, see SO 013 762-769. Some pages may not reproduce clearly from EDRS in microfiche or paper copy due to small print type and fading ink.
AVAILABLE FROM Project on East Asian Studies in Education, 108 Lane Hall, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 ($2.75).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Asian Studies; Bibliographies; *Chinese Culture; *Literature; *Poetry; *Prose; Resource Materials; Secondary Education; Units of Study

ABSTRACT

This unit will introduce secondary level students to Chinese literature. The first part of the unit discusses poetry which has always been the most highly prized form of Chinese literature. The discussion examines the "Complete Tang Poems," the "Book of Songs" compiled by Confucius, the "Songs of Chu," and the "Li Sao." Students learn about the greatest poet of Sung China (960-1279), Su Dongpo who is considered the Chinese Renaissance man. Sample poems for students to analyze are included. In the second part of the unit students read about and discuss Chinese prose. Historical and philosophical writings dominate the great tradition of Chinese prose, but there is also a little tradition of fiction, drama, and story-tellers' tales that have remained popular through the ages. Study questions are provided. Sample selections of prose for student analysis are included. The unit concludes with suggestions for further reading. (Author/RM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED211403

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Carol L. Waara

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

An Introduction to Chinese Literature

By Tony Kane for the
Project on East Asian Studies
in Education (PEASE)
108 Lane Hall
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109
Publication date: 1980

SP013768

An Introduction to Chinese Literature

Contents

I. Introduction to the Teacher

II. An Introduction to Chinese Literature

Chinese Poetry

Tang Poetry

Su Dongpo: The Chinese Renaissance Man

Chinese Prose

Twentieth-Century Literature

III. Study Questions

IV. Exercises and Selected Readings

V. Suggestions for Further Reading

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE LITERATURE

To The Teacher

This unit comes in three expandable sections to meet the needs of a wide variety of classrom situations. While the basic unit can be used by itself, it can provide only the most superficial introduction to the literature itself. The more time you have to do supplementary and suggested readings, the more you can get out of the unit. Hopefully, each student will find something to make him or her want to read more.

The first section on traditional Chinese poetry is the biggest because its topic is the broadest. It focuses on the poetry of Su Dongpo because we felt it synthesized many of the ideas about Chinese poetry presented in the unit and because its modern tone makes it more approachable to Western readers. At the very least, a deeper look at the Tang poets is desirable to make the unit more complete. The pre-Tang Taoist and Buddhist poets are also very popular among American readers.

The section on Chinese prose is really only to let the student know that the Chinese do write more than poetry. It is an invitation to read more deeply. If you have time to read all or part of a novel, it will be better. Monkey is the most approachable, while Dream of the Red Chamber is the most profound. The problem with Dream is that it is too wrapped up in Chinese values to be easily readable to a Western reader. We recommend it only for more advanced classes. If you are

doing Japanese literature as well, Dream makes an interesting comparison to the great Japanese novel The Tale of Genji.

The section on twentieth century Chinese literature does its topic the least justice: in many ways it should be a unit by itself. The literature is at once very similar to and very different from traditional Chinese literature. As always it is political and didactic, but the political lessons being drawn are more clearly stated and very different. Thousands of years of Chinese tradition are merging with a vastly different yet powerful Western literary tradition to create a new modern Chinese literature. It is fascinating to watch but difficult to know what will last. It is a politically charged topic that even experts have trouble presenting in a classroom situation. The works of Lu Xun are clearly the best, but even they require an understanding of the issues of the times to be easily understood. Liberal use of the suggestions for further reading will be necessary to cover this topic in any depth.

In general, we recommend patience in the teaching of Chinese literature. Chinese literature often seems silly and shallow to American readers, because the student does not perceive the cultural tradition behind the work that gives depth to any piece of literature. If one is willing to approach these works as windows on a foreign world, however, they can be used to learn about that cultural tradition. These are the greatest works of a great civilization: if

you or the students find them unsatisfying, it must be remembered that the fault lies partially in the cultural gap between the work and its reader. This unit tries to help you to bridge that gap.

Before you begin this unit, ask your students to think about how American and European literature reflects the cultures from which they come. What do the students know about China already? How do they imagine Chinese literature might reflect cultural differences? Have them write down some of their expectations, and discuss them again after you finish the unit. Have their perceptions changed? Discuss how and why. What similarities were there to Western literature? What surprised you? What works did individual students like best, and why?

If you use this unit, we hope you will take a little time to let us know how it worked. We need the experience of classroom teachers to help us make the unit better.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE LITERATURE

Writing has always been an important part of Chinese tradition. It has an almost mystical significance, probably related to its origin as a tool in religious ceremonies. The oldest Chinese characters discovered to date are found on ox bones and tortoise shells used for divination in the Shang dynasty (18th-12th centuries B.C.). They were discovered by archaeologists in the early 1900s in rural communities where they were being ground up and used in Chinese medicine. The magic of those ancient characters was still considered strong enough to cure twentieth century diseases!

The oldest works of Chinese literature are the Confucian classics: the Book of Changes, the Book of History, the Book of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. (A sixth classic, the Book of Music, has not survived) All are said to have been compiled and edited by Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and they reflect the traditional view of the function of Chinese literature that has persisted through the centuries. The Book of Changes is a manual of divination, but its purpose is to teach man how to live in harmony with nature. It is thus in truth a work of philosophy. The Book of Rites teaches man how to live in harmony with his fellow man by means of the proper use of ritual: an ancient book of etiquette that is also a profound philosophy of life.

The Book of History and the Spring and Autumn Annals are works of history, but they too are written for a very specific

purpose. They glorify the ancient sage rulers of China and criticize the mistakes of later rulers who, by the time of Confucius, had allowed the country to fall into chaos. Thus they were meant to be manuals for would-be rulers on how best to unify the country and bring peace to the world. The Book of Songs had a similar purpose: a collection of folk songs and poetry, it was intended to keep the educated elite of China in touch with the feelings of the people they ruled.

Thus the three major types of Chinese literature--historical writings, philosophical writings, and poetry--are all represented in the five Confucian classics. They also illustrate the didactic function associated with Chinese literature in the Confucian tradition: it was always written to serve a social purpose. Only a small elite could read the difficult Chinese written language, and what they read and wrote was intended to help them better understand and control human society. The educated elite were the rulers of China, and literature was meant to help them rule.

The Taoist tradition in Chinese philosophy specifically rejected the Confucian notion that some people were meant to rule others, and this was reflected in the Taoist literary tradition that grew around it. Even so, the Taoist classics were written for the purpose of relieving the chaos of human society and thus could also be considered functional in nature.

Americans do not usually perceive literature as having such an explicit social or political function. In this country,

literature is fiction and poetry written to entertain people who would rather read than watch television. So for the purpose of comparison, we will look at the fiction and poetry of China and leave the history and philosophy for another time.

Chinese Poetry

Poetry has always been the most highly prized form of Chinese literature. Although the difficulty of Chinese characters helped to keep literacy a privilege of the highest elite throughout most of Chinese history, almost anyone who did pick up a pen was apt to use it to write some poetry. The Complete Tang Poems, a compilation from the golden age of Chinese poetry, contains 48,000 poems by 2,200 poets. More recently, when the communist government turned the masses loose to write poetry as part of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, over 3700 volumes of verse were published in a single year alone.

Besides being the most revered form of Chinese literature, poetry is also probaly the oldest. Those early Shang magicians who invented the shell and bone script for their divinations would sometimes link words and sentences into a crude form of poetry. The Book of Songs was compiled by Confucius, but the poetry it contains is said to date back to the beginnings of the Zhou dynasty in the twelth century B.C. It contains some 305 poems ranging from a poem describing the founding

of the Zhou clan (an ancesteral hymn) to simple love poems. Their authors were anonymous people expressing the concerns of the day. Some are difficult even for a modern day Chinese to relate to, but others show how little things have changed. Take the poem entitled "Grain for Emperor Huan":

> The wheat is up, the barley
> ripens, who goes to reap it then?
> Only girls and old women;
> the men are all conscripted
> to fight the tribesmen; so came
> small officials demanding horses,
> big officials shouting for carts;
> I speak for the little people
> who hardly dare give voice
> to their thoughts.

(From The People Sing, Rewi Alley, tr., (Beijing, 1958), p. 46.) Thousands of years later and half a world away, we as Americans can still understand the feelings of that anonymous Chinese poet. It is easy to see why the Book of Songs has survived for so long.

The Zhou civilization was centered on the fertile plains of the Yellow River in central China. South of this, on the banks of the Yangtze River, a number of "barbarian" tribes developed their own civilization. The greatest of the southern states was Chu, and it produced its own anthology of poetry: the Songs of Chu. Unlike the anonymous poets of the Book of Songs, the poets of Chu were known by name. The greatest of these was Qu Yuan (Ch'ü Yüan), the man who is considered the father of Chinese poetry.

Qu Yuan (340?-278 B.C.) was a member of the ruling house of Chu, and as a young man he had a brilliant official career.

The plotting of jealous rivals led to his banishment from court in a series of setbacks in which he was exiled, recalled, and banished again. He remained loyal to the Chu king throughout (or so the story goes), but the King ignored his sage advice once too often and was captured by the armies of the Qin (the military state of northwest China that eventually unified all of China in 221 B.C.). The king died in exile and the Chu capital was destroyed. Qu Yuan, driven by grief, threw himself into the Miluo (mi-lo) River and drowned. Boats were sent to search for his body, and bundles of sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaves, called Zhong zi, were thrown into the river to keep the fish from devouring Qu's body. This event is still commemorated annually on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month in the Dragon Boat Festival. The Li Sao, Qu's long, autobiographical poem, is still among China's greatest classics.

Qu's story is important as a model of the career of the Chinese statesman-poet. Throughout history China's poets have come from the educated elite and at some time in their lives served as government officials. Exile was a common punishment of officials who fell out of favor, and while few chose a life of exile, many were consoled by their identification with a tradition of exile-poets dating to ancient times. Qu was the first, and references to his story can be found in the works of most of the great poets of Chinese history.

Tang Poetry

Confucian poetry flourished in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), when even a number of emperors distinguished themselves as poets. In the period of disunion that followed, Taoist poetry of the recluse and later Buddhist poetry dominated the literary world. It was in this period that the famous Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove wrote about nature and drank their cares away. When the Chinese was finally reunited, these various traditions flowed together in a great flowering of Chinese poetry during the Tang dynasty. (618-906 A.D.).

The Chinese empire reached new heights during the Tang. The imperial capital of Changan was the largest, most advanced city in Asia and probably in the world. Traders came from as far away as the Middle East, and intellectual and literary activity boomed with the flourishing economy. It was also in this period that poetry reached its golden age. The names of the Tang poets Li Bo (Li Po) and Du Fu (Tu Fu) live on as the greatest in 5000 years of Chinese poetry.

Li Bo (701-762) began writing poetry in his childhood in Sichuan, but he did not become famous until his early forties when, on a visit to the capital, he caught the attention of the emperor. Li was appointed to the Hanlin Academy, an honor reserved for the greatest scholars in the country. In spite of this, his favorite occupation was drinking, and it is said that he spent more time in local taverns than at court.

After three years he left Changan for an extended tour of the empire. When the emperor was overthrown in the massive An Lushan rebellion, Li spent a short time in exile, although an amnesty soon brought him back. Legend has it that he died several years later when in a drunken stupor he leaned too far out of a boat in an effort to catch the moon's reflection in the water.

Li was thus the epitome of the romantic, Taoist strain in Chinese poetry. His disregard for established poetic form was symbolic of his free spirit, and his many odes to drinking were symbolic of his rejection of the social responsibility imposed on educated Chinese by the Confucian tradition. Here, in one of his most famous works, we see the essence of his philosophy of life:

With a pot of wine among the flowers,
All alone I drink—no dear ones at my side.
Raising my cup, I invite the bright moon
To make with my shadow a group of three.
But the moon does not know how to drink
And the shadow vainly follows me around.
For a while, with moon and shadow as companions,
I would seek pleasure while it is spring.
I sing and the moon rambles;
I dance and the shadow runs helter-skelter.
While sober, we enjoy ourselves together;
After drinking, we part with each other.
Forever, we'll pledge a non-sentimental journey,
Awaiting each other at the distant Milky Way.

(From Liu Wu-chi, An Introduction to Chinese Literature, p. 75)

Du Fu (712-770), a younger contemporary and close friend of Li Bo's, was completely opposite in temperament and style. Du was a Confucian moralist, and his poems were masterpieces of craftsmanship and technique. While Li sought escape in

drink, Du was anxious to serve society in the best Confucian tradition. Together they represent two inseparable halves of the glory that was Tang poetry. The whole would not be complete without both halves: they are a poetic manifestation of the Chinese philosophical concept of Yin and Yang.

Du came from a poor scholarly family in Honan. Although he failed in the final court examination in Changan, he was able to secure a minor position in the capital. Like Li Bo, he suffered during the An Lushan rebellion but was later restored to his post. Eventually dismissed for his outspoken defense of a fellow official, Du retired to a local position in the provinces. He grew old in a thatched hut, "writing poetry and leading a life of peace and contentment" (a perfect expression of the Confucian ideal of a scholar's life in retirement).

Du was a master of the "regulated verse" style of Tang poetry, as well as the shorter version called "truncated verse." Composed of eight and four lines respectively, the poet was constrained to follow a complicated set of rules for rhyme scheme and tonal pattern. The result was a highly evocative form of poetry as short as twenty syllables (the Japanese later refined this even further to the seventeen syllable haiku). The poetry was rich in natural imagery and often contained references to the past, as seen in Du's poem "To Li Bo at the Sky's end:

A cold wind blows from the far sky...
What are you thinking of, old friend?
The wildgeese never answer me.
Rivers and lakes are flooded with rain.
...A poet should beware of prosperity,
Yet demons can haunt a wanderer.
Ask an unhappy ghost, throw poems to him
Where he drowned himself in the Miluo River.

(From The Jade Mountain, Witter Bynner, tr., Vintage Books, p. 150)

The last lines are a reference to Qu Yuan, and indicate how in spite of their differences, the two shared a sense of community in their identification with the great poet of the past.

Su Dongpo: The Chinese Renaissance Man

The Tang dynasty never recovered its full glory after the An Lushan rebellion, although it continued on until 906 A.D. After a brief period of disunion, China was reunified by a peasant rebel who founded a new dynasty, the Sung (960-1279). Sung China experienced a massive technological and social revolution, similar to the Renaissance of early modern Europe. Gunpowder and moveable type were invented in Sung China. Philosophical thought flourished with the development of Neo-Confucianism, somewhat similar to Europe's Reformation and the Age of Reason.

The Sung's greatest poet was Su Shih, better known by his literary name: Su Dongpo (Su Tung-p'o, 1037-1101). Su was active in politics along with his father and brother, making them one of the most famous political families of their time and in all of Chinese history. Reformers were

suggesting sweeping changes in the land tenure and legal systems of China, and the Sus were opponents of the reforms. When the reformers were in power Su Shih suffered a period of exile. A master of prose writing, his cogent arguments against the reforms had angered too many people.

Su's fame as a statesman and essayist were exceeded by his fame as a poet and artist. He was a master painter and calligrapher, but his greatest contribution came in his development of the ci (tz'u) form of poetry. In the ci style, new lyrics were written to the "tune" of ancient poems. These were written not to a musical score as we know it, but to a set tonal pattern and rhyme scheme. Su also mastered the prose-poem style of the fu: his "Ode to the Red Cliff" (I&II) are the most famous examples of that genre.

Su's opposition to the reform movement was not a callous refusal to aid the people of China. He sincerely believed that the reforms would do more harm than good, and the suffering caused by the reformers' inability to put their ideals into practice suggest he may have been right. Much of his poetry reflects his sensitivity for the plight of the commnn man. The following selections are all from the Burton Watson translations in Su Tung-p'o, Selections From a Sung Dynasty Poet, Columbia University Press (New York: 1965).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Su Tung-p'o, Selections from a Sung Dynasty Poet:

Lament of the Farm Wife of Wu (1072)

Rice this year ripens so late!
We watch, but when will frost winds come?
They come—with rain in bucketfuls;
The harrow sprouts mold, the sickle rusts.
My tears are all cried out, but rain never ends;
It hurts to see yellow stalks flattened in the mud.
We camped in a grass shelter a month by the fields;
Then it cleared and we reaped the grain, followed the wagon home,
Sweaty, shoulders sore, carting it to town—
The price it fetched, you'd think we came with chaff.
We sold the ox to pay taxes, broke up the roof for kindling;
We'll get by for a time, but what of next year's hunger?
Officials demand cash now—they won't take grain;
The long northwest border tempts invaders.
Wise men fill the court—why do things get worse?
I'd be better off bride to the River Lord!

Wu is the old name for the region around the mouth of the Yangtze. *7-character.*

Line 15. "Wise men." Literally, Kung (Sui) and Huang (Pa), two officials in the time of Emperor Hsüan (73–49 B.C.) of the Han, who worked for the welfare of the peasants.

Line 16. "Bride to the River Lord." In ancient times it was the custom each year to sacrifice a young girl as a "bride" to the River Lord, the god of the Yellow River, by placing her on a bed and letting her float down the river until the bed capsized and she drowned.

New Year's Eve (1071)

II New Year's Eve—you'd think I could go home early
But official business keeps me.
I hold the brush and face them with tears:
Pitiful convicts in chains,
Little men who tried to fill their bellies,
Fell into the law's net, don't understand disgrace.
And I? In love with a meager stipend
I hold on to my job and miss the chance to retire.
Don't ask who is foolish or wise;
All of us alike scheme for a meal.
The ancients would have freed them a while at New Year's—
Would I dare do likewise? I am silent with shame.

No title. Written in Hangchow. In 1090, when Su wrote another poem on the same rhyme, he described the circumstances under which he wrote this poem. "New Year's Eve I was on duty in the city office, which was full of prisoners in chains. Evening came and still I could not get away and return to my quarters, and so I wrote a poem on the wall." By custom, cases involving the death penalty had to be settled before the New Year, and it was such cases that kept the poet at his office. *5-character.*

Not all of Su's poetry was political, however. Sometimes he used poems to express his views on poetry and painting.

Reading the Poetry of Meng Chiao: Two Poems (1078)

31 Night: reading Meng Chiao's poems,
Characters fine as cow's hair.
By the cold lamp, my eyes blur and swim.
Good passages I rarely find—
Lone flowers poking up from the mud—
But more hard words than the *Odes* or *Li sao*—
Jumbled rocks clogging the clear stream,
Making rapids too swift for poling.
My first impression is of eating little fishes—
What you get's not worth the trouble;
Or of boiling tiny mud crabs
And ending up with some empty claws.
For refinement he might compete with monks
But he'll never match his master Han Yü.
Man's life is like morning dew,
A flame eating up the oil night by night.
Why should I strain my ears
Listening to the squeaks of this autumn insect?
Better lay aside the book
And drink my cup of jade-white wine.

Written when Su was governor of Hsü-chou in the northwest corner of Kiangsu. Meng Chiao (751–814), a well known T'ang poet, was a disciple of the even better known poet and statesman, Han Yü (768–824). Su was probably reading a printed edition of the so-called small character variety. This is the first of the two poems. *5-character.*

[59]

Who Says a Painting Must Look Like Life? (1087)

67 Written on paintings of flowering branches by Secretary Wang of Yen-ling: two poems.

Who says a painting must look like life?
He sees only with children's eyes.
Who says a poem must stick to the theme?
Poetry is certainly lost on him.
Poetry and painting share a single goal—
Clean freshness and effortless skill.
Pien Luan's sparrows live on paper;
Chao Ch'ang's flowers breathe with soul.
But what are they beside these scrolls,
Bold sketches, with spirit in every stroke?
Who'd think one dot of red
Could call up a whole unbounded spring!

The full name and identity of Secretary Wang are unknown. This is the first of the two poems, probably written to accompany a picture of a branch of flowering plum, the symbol of early spring. *5-character.*

Lines 7–8. Pien Luan lived in the late eighth century; Chao Ch'ang's dates are 998–1022.

[109]

The loneliness of exile was also a common theme of Su's poetry, with a special twinge of sadness about his constant separation from his brother:

Mid-Autumn Moon (1078)

36 Six years the moon shone at mid-autumn;
Five years it saw us parted.
I sing your farewell song;
Sobs from those who sit with me.
The southern capital must be busy,
But you won't let the occasion pass:
Hundred-league lake of melted silver,
Thousand-foot towers in the pendant mirror—
At third watch, when songs and flutes are stilled
And figures blur in the clear shade of trees,
You return to your north hall rooms,
Cold light glinting on the dew of leaves;
Calling for wine, you drink with your wife
And tell the children stories, thinking of me.
You have no way of knowing I've been sick,
That I face the pears and chestnuts, cup empty,
And stare east of the old riverbed
Where buckwheat blossoms spread their snow.
I wanted to write a verse to your last year's song
But I was afraid my heart would break.

Yet not all of Su's poetry was sad: he could write about the love of his family or even a light hearted tribute to his dog:

Children (1075)

29 Children don't know what worry means!
Stand up to go and they hang on my clothes.
I'm about to scold them
But my wife eggs them on in their silliness:
"The children are silly but you're much worse!
What good does all this worrying do?"
Stung by her words, I go back to my seat.
She rinses a wine cup to put before me.
How much better than Liu Ling's wife,
Grumbling at the cost of her husband's drinking!

Black Muzzle (1100)

84 When I came to Tan-chou, I acquired a watchdog named Black Muzzle. He was very fierce, but soon got used to people. He went with me to Ho-p'u, and when we passed Ch'eng-mai, he startled everyone on the road by swimming across the river. So as a joke I wrote this poem for him.

Black Muzzle, south sea dog,
How lucky I am to be your master!
On scraps growing plump as a gourd,
Never grumbling for fancier food.
Gentle by day, you learn to tell my friends;
Ferocious by night, you guard the gate.
When I told you I was going back north,
You wagged your tail and danced with delight,
Bounced along after the boy,
Tongue out, dripping a shower of sweat.
You wouldn't go by the long bridge
But took a short cut across the clear deep bay,
Bobbing along like a water bird,
Scrambling up the bank fiercer than a tiger.
You steal meat—a fault, though a minor one,
But I'll spare you the whip this time.
You nod your head by way of thanks,
Heaven having given you no words.
Someday I'll get you to take a letter home—
Yellow Ears was your ancestor, I'm sure.

Line 20. "Yellow Ears." Pet dog of the poet Lu Chi (261–303). When Lu Chi was in the capital at Loyang, he became worried because he had had no news from his family in Wu, near the mouth of the Yangtze. So he wrote a letter and, putting it in a bamboo container, tied it to Yellow Ears's neck and sent it home by way of the dog.

Finally, although in public life a Confucian, Su maintained a private philosophical interest in Taoism and Buddhism. Much of his poetry consists of simple versus about nature, wine, and escaping the cares of the material world:

Drank Tonight at Eastern Slope (1082)

54 To the tune of "The Immortal by the River." Coming home at night to Lin-kao.

Drank tonight at Eastern Slope, sobered up, drank again;
Got home somewhere around third watch.
The houseboy snores like thunder;
I bang the gate but nobody answers.
Leaning on my stick, I listen to river sounds.

Always it irks me—this body not my own.
When can I forget the world's business?
Night far gone, wind still, river creped in ripples:
I'll leave here in a little boat,
On far waters spend the years remaining.

When Yü-k'o Painted Bamboo (1087)

65 Written on paintings of bamboo by Wen Yü-k'o in Ch'ao Pu-chih's collection: three poems.

When Yü-k'o painted bamboo,
He saw bamboo only, never people.
Did I say he saw no people?
So rapt he forgot even himself—
He himself became bamboo,
Putting out fresh growth endlessly.
Chuang Tzu no longer with us,
Who can fathom this uncanny power?

In the career of Su Shih we see similarities to that of Qu Yuan; in his poetry we see both the free spirit of Li Bo and the Confucian concerns of Du Fu. Su reflected the totality of the ideal Chinese intellectual: a public figure, a renowned artist, and a philosophical soul. He was the ultimate Chinese "renaissance man," and his work reflects both the depth and the breadth of the entire history of traditional Chinese poetry.

Chinese Prose

Chinese literature is most famous for its poetry, but there is also a rich body of prose that begins with the Confucian classics. Historical and philosophical writings dominate the "great tradition" of Chinese prose, but there is also a "little tradition" of fiction, drama, and storytellers' tales that have remained popular through the ages.

One of the earliest of these prose masterpieces is by the Taoist poet Tao Qian (also known by the name Tao Yuanming, 365-427), and it describes a Chinese version of utopia. It reflects an ideal expressed in the earliest Taoist classic, the Daode jing (Tao-te ching, sometimes translated "The Way and its Power"), in which people live in small, isolated communities. Tao Qian's utopia is called "Peach Blossom Spring," and although it cannot be found on any map, it has lived on in the hearts of many Chinese poets through the ages.

Short fiction flourished in the Tang, but the great centerpieces of Chinese prose are the long novels that began to appear in the earliest years of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Both short stories and novels developed from the oral tradition of storytellers' tales, and as a result they tended to be written in a more colloquial style than the austere literary Chinese of political essayists and philosophers. The four great Chinese novels of this period were all based on popular story cycles. Their "authors" compiled the numerous

versions of these tales and wrote them down into a readable form, making suitable embellishments when the need arose.

The first two Chinese novels are attributed to the same man: Luo Guanzhi (Lo Kuan-chih, 1330-1400). The Romance of the Three Kingdoms is an account of the fall of the Han dynasty and the period of disunion which followed it (the historical period known as the Three Kingdoms period is dated 221-264). The novel tells of the efforts of Liu Bei, the legal Han successor, to find allies in his struggle against his powerful enemy, Cao Cao (Ts'ao Ts'ao). Cao Cao is one of the greatest hero-villains in Chinese history: the Chinese equivalent of "speak of the devil" is "speak of Cao Cao." Like the early European novel Ivanhoe, Romance tells of the heroic deeds of knight-errants in a time of great turmoil.

Luo's second novel, known by the Chinese name Shuihu zhuan, is known either as The Water Margin or by the title of the Pearl Buck translation: All Men Are Brothers. Another historical novel, it tells of the activities of 108 bandit-heroes in the early twelfth century. Because it portrays its outlaws as noble-minded friends of the people, it might be compared to the English legend of Robin Hood (also based on oral tales). Both novels have changed and developed over time and remain popular in novel form and as children's stories and plays based on the original. Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), who in his early career was branded a bandit by the authorities, was said to have been particularly fond of Shuihu zhuan.

The third classic novel of Ming China was Journey to the West, translated by Arthur Waley in an extremely readable version called Monkey. It is based on the true story of the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Xuanzang, who traveled to India and back in search of scriptures between the years 629-645. The difficult journey through Central Asia was believed impossible for a single human to survive, and a rich tradition of folk tales arose concerning the magic spirits who protected the monk on his journey. The most important of these spirits was Sun Wukong, the monkey king, an irreverent sage who remains a favorite in children's stories and on the Pe king Opera stage.

The final novel of the "golden four" is known in English as The Golden Lotus. It is a semi-pornographic tale of the adventures of a famous Chinese playboy. Legend has it that its author wrote the book to avenge the death of his father at the hands of an evil minister. The minister was known to love pornography, so the author wrote a story that he hoped his enemy would not be able to put down. The corner of each page was treated with poison, so as the minister licked his finger to help turn the pages, he slowly poisoned himself to death!

The novel blossomed as a form in the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty (1644-1911), and this period produced the greatest of all Chinese novels: Dream of the Red Chamber. It tells of the decay of a great gentry family in poetry and prose, and remains unmatched in the annals of Chinese literature to date.

Twentieth Century Literature

Modern China can be dated from the "renaissance" of the Sung dynasty, the restoration of the Ming, or the time of the great emperors of the Qing. Yet while fourteenth century China was dazzling to the European eyes of Marco Polo, nineteenth century China seemed poor, backward, and an easy target for the European guns of the western imperialist powers. Twentieth century China underwent drastic changes in response to the imperialist threat, and literature was in the forefront of those changes.

In 1911 over two thousand years of Chinese imperial tradition gave way to a republican revolution. A short time later, however, the president of the new republic was trying to crown himself emperor and the Japanese were demanding even more humiliating concessions than the western powers had demanded earlier. The educated elite began to see that new political institutions were not enough. They saw the need to modernize the minds of the Chinese people in order to support her modern institutions, and as a part of this effort they called for a literary revolution.

The literary revolution was a major focus of what has become known as the May Fourth Movement. Named for a demonstration protesting the Japanese annexation of Shandong on May 4, 1919, the movement is generally dated 1917-1921. The May Fourth writers attempted to replace the difficult literary Chinese language with a new vernacular language. They hoped that this

new language would be easier to master and thus help to increase literacy among the Chinese people. This was a necessary prerequisite in the process of educating people with the new concepts of science and democracy thought to be necessary in the new industrial world.

Although the May Fourth writers rejected the Confucian tradition in favor of modern western ideas, in some ways they were still very much bound by that tradition. As educated people they still saw themselves as the natural leaders of the new China they wished to create. Although they adopted many western ideas in their approach to literature, most of them still viewed literature as a vehicle for educating the people. The difference was that instead of educating only their own class in the proper methods of ruling society, they sought to educate masses of people in order to mobilize them against the powerful imperialist threat.

The greatest writer to emerge from this movement was Lu Xun (Lu Hsun, 1881-1936). He is still considered today to be the greatest hero in China's cultural revolution. His short story "A Madman's Diary" was the first story ever written in the vernacular language, and the hero of his best known work, "The True Story of Ah-Q," is the equivalent of the Chinese Everyman in modern dress. Even on Taiwan, where Lu Xun's works have been banned since the Nationalist government took over in 1949, everybody knows the name Ah Q.

When Chiang Kai-shek attempted to purge the country of communist influence in the late 1920s and early 1930s, he

forced people to choose between the Nationalist and Communist parties. Lu Xun and a large majority of China's young intellectuals chose the communists as the more democratic of the two, a decision that forced them toward the political left in the face of Chiang's repressive policies. They began to believe that a literary revolution was not enough. Writers must take a more active part in the political struggles of the day, they believed, and the new slogan became "from literary revolution to revolutionary literature."

The most important statement of the revolutionary literature movement is Mao Zedong's "Talks to the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" of May, 1942. Mao's "Talks" were part of a larger reeducation movement which took place in communist controlled Yenan. While the May Fourth Movement had been motivated by a desire to propagate modern western ideas in general, the Yenan Rectification Movement sought to inculcate communist cadres with the teachings of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Once again, literature was considered an important vehicle for spreading the word, and writers were thus a primary target of the campaign.

The thrust of Mao's "Talks" was to tell the writers that what China needed most was a literature to serve the workers, peasants and soldiers who were the backbone of the Chinese revolution. China could no longer afford writers who wrote only of their own personal problems or creative urges. While Lu Xun had lived in the old society and attacked it, Mao called

upon writers to go among the masses and describe the more positive aspects of revolutionary China. This was the kind of literature Mao believed would capture the minds of the people and fire them with revolutionary enthusiasm.

You will recall that in traditional Chinese prose, the ideal life was summed up by the Taoist allegory of utopia in "Peach Blossom Spring." Chairman Mao was fond of a very different allegorical tale from Chinese history. With a slight alteration of the story's end, Mao used it to sum up his own view of how a poor and blank China could take its rightful place in the modern world. He offered no tranquil utopia, but instead urged the Chinese people to struggle for their goals, no matter how long it took. This was the lesson of "The Foolish Old Man Who Moved Mountains."

Study Questions

1. What is the purpose of Chinese literature? Is this different in the West?
2. Are you surprised that Qu Yuan, the father of Chinese poetry, was also a famous politician? What does this tell you about Chinese literature?
3. How do the Confucian and Taoist traditions conflict, and how do they compliment each other? What is the significance of the fact that Li Bo and Du Fu, though different in many ways, were the closest of friends. (If you understand the concept of Yin and Yang you might use it in this discussion.)
4. In what ways was Su Dongpo a "renaissance man"? Compare him to the European renaissance men, and discuss the differences and similarities between Chinese and Western literature and culture in general.
5. Is twentieth century Chinese literature closer to the Chinese tradition its authors sought to reject or to the western tradition from which they borrowed? Discuss its relation to each.

T'ao Ch'ien (365-427)

[T'ao hua yüan chi]

Peach Blossom Spring

During the reign-period T'ai yuan [326-97] of the Chin dynasty there lived in Wu-ling a certain fisherman. One day, as he followed the course of a stream, he became unconscious of the distance he had travelled. All at once he came upon a grove of blossoming peach trees which lined either bank for hundreds of paces. No tree of any other kind stood amongst them, but there were fragrant flowers, delicate and lovely to the eye, and the air was filled with drifting peachbloom.

The fisherman, marvelling, passed on to discover where the grove would end. It ended at a spring; and then there came a hill. In the side of the hill was a small opening which seemed to promise a gleam of light. The fisherman left his boat and entered the opening. It was almost too cramped at first to afford him passage; but when he had taken a few dozen steps he emerged into the open light of day. He faced a spread of level land. Imposing buildings stood among rich fields and pleasant ponds all set with mulberry and willow. Linking paths led everywhere, and the fowls and dogs of one farm could be heard from the next. People were coming and going and working in the fields. Both the men and the women dressed in exactly the same manner as people outside; white-haired elders and tufted children alike were cheerful and contented.

Some, noticing the fisherman, started in great surprise and asked him where he had come from. He told them his story. They then invited him to their home, where they set out wine and killed chickens for a feast. When news of his coming spread through the village everyone came in to question him. For their part they told how their forefathers, fleeing from the troubles of the age of Ch'in, had come with their wives and neighbours to this isolated place, never to leave it. From that time on they had been cut off from the outside world. They asked what age was this: they had never even

30

heard of the Han, let alone its successors the Wei and the Chin. The fisherman answered each of their questions in full, and they sighed and wondered at what he had to tell. The rest all invited him to their homes in turn, and in each house food and wine were set before him. It was only after a stay of several days that he took his leave.

"Do not speak of us to the people outside," they said. But when he had regained his boat and was retracing his original route, he marked it at point after point; and on reaching the prefecture he sought audience of the prefect and told him of all these things. The prefect immediately despatched officers to go back with the fisherman. He hunted for the marks he had made, but grew confused and never found the way again.

The learned and virtuous hermit Liu Tzu-chi heard the story and went off elated to find the place. But he had no success, and died at length of a sickness. Since that time there have been no further "seekers of the ford."

TRANSLATED BY CYRIL BIRCH

This is an excerpt from *Chinese Poetry* (Teacher's Guide), a filmstrip and record/tape introduction from Warren Schloat Productions, Inc., A Prentice-Hall Company (West Nyack, New York, 1973).

TRANSLATIONS

Language is a reflection of the attitudes and culture of a people. It influences the way of thinking and the cultural characteristics of the people who speak it. Any language, therefore, is not literally translatable, since cultures will interpret according to their own language and ways of thinking; and concepts in one language may not have counterparts in the other. For example, cause and effect in Chinese are not sequential, but are parallel aspects of the same truth. If we are not aware of this difference in cultural concepts, we are very apt to misinterpret the meaning of a certain line of poetry or construe meanings that simply are not there.

We must also be aware of the fact that many published translators of Chinese poetry are scholars and not poets. Often, English versions are translations of translations in other languages, sometimes rendered by a western poet who has absolutely no knowledge of the Chinese language. Therefore, the English versions that we read may be far removed from the original poem, in meaning, structure, style, and tone. *The Book of Songs* has been rendered into English by only a few scholars, notably James Legge and Arthur Waley. However, many favorite songs from this collection appear in anthologies of Chinese or Oriental poetry, rendered into English by numerous poets and scholars. "Lovely the Young Peach Tree" in Part One of this program may serve as an illustration of this point. The version in the script is based on the Mao Text interpretation and is offered by Burton Watson, Professor of Chinese Literature at Columbia University. Another English rendition is given here, by Robert Payne, British scholar, with the acknowledged help of many Chinese scholars and based in part on both Legge's and Waley's translations.

THE YOUNG PEACH-TREES

The slender young peach-tree,
The flowers ablaze.
The young brides are going home,
Bringing fruit to chamber and house.

The slender young peach-tree,
How the fruit swells!
The young brides are going home,
Bringing fruit to chamber and house.

The slender young peach-tree,
With glossy shining leaves.
The young brides are going home,
Bringing fruit to chamber and house.

(from *The White Pony*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.)

The third version offered here is by Arthur Waley, generally considered the foremost translator of Chinese poetry.

113
BUXOM is the peach-tree;
How its flowers blaze!
Our lady going home
Brings good to family and house.

Buxom is the peach-tree;
How its fruit swells!
Our lady going home
Brings good to family and house.

Buxom is the peach-tree;
How thick its leaves!
Our lady going home
Brings good to the people of her house.

(*The Book of Songs*, 1960. Grove Press. N.Y.)

The differences between the three versions are perhaps only a matter of style. It is still a wedding song and the meaning is basically the same for all three. But the tone and words differ, giving separate connotations and interpretations of feeling which, of course, are vital aspects of every poem.

We should also be aware that scholars may deliberately construe interpretations from a poem depending on their purpose for translation or the theme of their anthology. To illustrate this point consider two translations of another song from *The Book of Songs*. The relationship between people was a prevalent theme in ancient Chinese poetry and since these songs were presumably collected by Confucius from the peasants, it is expected that the subject of some may be

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the relationship between the peasant and his feudal lord. When these songs were edited and written down by court officials during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 221 A.D.), they were often given political connotations expressing the opinions of these statesmen or affirming some ethical or political Confucian rule. By the time Arthur Waley translated these songs into English at the turn of this century, it is conceivable that they had been subjected to additional interpretations throughout the centuries and were much different from the original oral version of an ancient Chinese peasant. The meanings are moved even further from the original by translation into a foreign language with an entirely different alphabetical base. Furthermore, the translator was a British scholar with all the attitudes and cultural characteristics of that 19th century western empire, the United Kingdom. Here is Arthur Waley's translation of an excerpt from the song #259 (no title given):

Chop, chop they cut the hardwood
And lay it on the river bank
By the waters so clear and rippling.
If we did not sow, if we did not reap,
How should we get corn, three hundred stockyards?
If you did not hunt, if you did not chase,
One would not see all those badgers hanging in your courtyard.
No, indeed, that lord
Does not feed on the bread of idleness.
(*The Book of Songs*, p. 286, as above.)

Waley saw the relationship between peasant and lord as a harmonious and respectful one. Rewi Alley, on the other hand, saw the relationship in this song as an oppressive and harmful one. His anthologies, used as sources in this program, are based on the communist theme of the people struggling to free themselves from the rule of an elite few. Published in the 1950's in Peking, the political interpretations of this and other poems are obviously colored by the activities and government in China at that time. Here is Rewi Alley's translation of the same part of the song entitled "Peasant and Lord":

From the woods came sounds of chopping, of trees falling,
Of peasants dragging the timber to the banks of the rivers
Where cool waters went ripply by.
In the great home of their Lord,
Who neither sowed nor reaped,
Was stored the produce of three hundred families:
Their lord who shared not the hardships of the hunt
Yet had wild game hanging in his kitchens.
Surely the men we should respect are those who work,
And thus earn their livelihood.
(*The People Speak Out*, p. 1-2. Peking. 1954.)

In reality, the original folk song was probably entirely different from either translation, yet we will never know exactly what the song meant.

Another reason for differences in translations of Chinese poems, other than cultural and language biases, is the nature of the Chinese character itself. James J.Y. Liu explains the difference between "word" and "character":

> *A 'word' in Chinese, as in any other language, is a unit of speech, which may be of one or more syllables, and hence written with one or more characters. A 'character' is a written symbol which corresponds to one syllable and may form one word or part of a word.*

(*The Art of Chinese Poetry*, by James J.Y. Liu., p. 6. © 1962. University of Chicago Press.)

Mr. Liu further expands the nature of the Chinese language by illustrating that a Chinese word, like English, may have several different meanings, some of which may be mutually exclusive. The word *sheng*, for example, used as a verb, could mean: to live, to give birth to, to be born; as a noun: life, young man, student; as an adjective: alive, raw, strange, innate, natural, lively. Therefore the poet can compress several meanings and emotions into one word and the reader must try to figure out as best he can what the poet was trying to communicate. This close-packed effect of words and lines is much of what gives Chinese poetry its beauty. It is also the very thing that makes translations so difficult and a true literal interpretation virtually impossible.

-26-

These few illustrations will enhance the study of Chinese poetry in the American classroom, while cautioning the western reader to give allowance to the most free interpretations of the poems. For further study in the analysis aspect of Chinese poetry, James J.Y. Liu's *The Art of Chinese Poetry* is an excellent source.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Suggested excercise: take this literal translation of a Li Bo poem and attempt your own translation.

月下獨酌

yuè xià dú zhuó

Moon Under Alone Drink

李白

Li Po

花間一壺酒　獨酌無相親
huā jiān yì hú jiǔ　dú zhuó wú xiāng qīn
flowers among one pot wine　alone drink no mutually intimate

舉杯邀明月　對影成三人
jǔ bēi yāo míng yuè　duì yǐng chéng sān rén
raise cup invite bright moon　opposite shadow becoes a 3 people

月既不解飲　影徒隨我身
yuè jì bù jiě yǐn　yǐng tú suí wǒ shēn
moon when not understand drink　shadow in vain follow my body

暫伴月將影　行樂須及春
zhàn bàn yuè jiāng yǐng　xíng lè xū jí chūn
briefly com- moon together shadow　get out pleasure must when Spring
panion

我歌月徘徊　我舞影零亂
wǒ gē yuè bái-huí　wǒ wǔ yǐng líng-luàn
I sing moon walk to & fro　I dance shadow disordered

醒時同交歡　醉後各分散
xǐng shí tóng jiāo huān　zuì hòu gè fēn sàn
sober time together join rejoice　drunk after each separate disperse

永結無情遊　相期邈雲漢
yǒng jié wú qíng yóu　xiāng qī miǎo yún-hàn
forever make a contract　lack emotion wander　mutual fixed time　distant　Celestial River

Translation:

With a pot of wine among the flowers,
All alone I drink--no dear ones at my side.
Raising my cup, I invite the bright moon
To make with my shadow a group of three.
But the moon does not know how to drink
And the shadow vainly follows me around.
For a while, with moon and shadow as companions,
I would seek pleasure while it is spring.
I sing and the moon rambles;
I dance and the shadow runs helter-skelter.
While sober, we enjoy ourselves together;
After drinking, we part with each other.
Forever, we'll pledge a non-sentimental journey,
Awaiting each other at the distant Milky Way.

Readings in Traditional Chinese History

C.S. Chang

Note: The following selections are from The White Pony, An Anthology of Chinese Poetry ed. by Robert Payne (Mentor Paperbacks, 1960), pp. 29, 39-40, 42, 46, 48.

The Book of Songs (Shih-ching)

Editor's Note: The Shih-ching is an anthology of ancient Chinese poetry from the Western Chou period to about the fifth century B.C. The following poems are selected to illustrate the temper and sentiment of the period covered and the nature and variety of Chou poetry.

Clearing the Fields

We clear the grasses and trees,
We plow and carve the land,
Two thousand men and women scrabbling weeds
Along the low wet lands, along the dyke walls.
The masters, the eldest sons,
The laborers, the hired servants,
They mark out the fields, they ply their colters,
Overflowing food baskets are brought to them,
They gaze on their fair wives
And press close to them.
They have sharp plowshares,
They set to work on the south acres,
They sow the many kinds of grain.
Each seed holds a moist germ;
Splendidly, splendidly the young grain shoots forth,
Sleekly, sleekly the young plants rise,
Tenderly, tenderly comes the young grain.
Thousands of weeders scrabbling among the weeds!
Host upon host of reapers!
Close-huddled stooks arranged in due order!
Myriads, many hundred thousands and millions of grains!

The White Pony

From them come wine and sweet liquor,
Offering to the ancestors, the male and the female,
In fulfillment of sacrifices.
So glory shall come to the land.
They will have a sharp smell of pepper,
They will give comfort to the aged.
It is not only here that it is so,
It is not only how that it is so:
But in most ancient times ever and ever.

My Lord Is Full of Delight

My lord is full of delight.
In his left hand he holds a flute,
With his right he summons me to play with him.
Oh, what sweet joy!

My lord is full of blessing.
In his left hand he holds dancing plumes,
With his right he summons me to dance with him.
Oh, what sweet joy!

O Minister of War

O minister of war,
We are the king's fangs and claws.
Why have you piled on us this misery?
We have no place in which to rest.

O minister of war,
We are the king's claws and teeth.
Why have you piled on us this misery?
We have nowhere to lay our heads.

O minister of war,
Truly you have behaved curiously.
You have piled on us this misery.
Our mothers lack food.

Chung Tzu

I beg you, Chung Tzu,
Do not break into my house,
Do not force a way through the willows I planted.
It is not that I care for the willows,
Only I fear my father and mother.
I love you, Chung Tzu, dearly--
Oh, but I am afraid, really afraid
Of what my father and mother will say.

I beg you, Chung Tzu,
Do not leap through my wall,
Do not force a way through the mulberries I planted.
It is not that I care for the mulberries,
Only I fear my brothers.
I love you, Chung Tzu, dearly--
Oh, but I am afraid, really afraid
Of what my brothers will say.

I beg you, Chung Tzu,
Do not come through my garden,
Do not force a way through the sandalwood I have planted.
It is not that I care for the sandalwood,
I am afraid of people talking.
I love you, Chung Tzu, dearly,
Only I am afraid, really afraid
Of what they will say.

There Is a Girl in Our Coach

There is a girl in our coach.
Her face is like falling mallow blossoms.
Oh, they rustle, oh, they glitter,
Jades and cornelians hanging from her belt.
She is the eldest daughter of Chiang--
Demure and sweet and lovely is she!

She is traveling the same road.
Her face is like a falling mallow flower.
Oh, they rustle, Oh, they glitter,
Ting-ling go the jade girdle gems.
She is the beautiful eldest daughter of Chiang;
Her virtue is memorable.

My Husband

Heiho, my husband is brave,
One among millions.
Watch him swinging his pole--
Outrider to the king's chariot.

My husband has gone to the east:
My head whirls like flying thistledown.
Should I perfume and anoint my hair?
Why should I try to look pretty?

Let the rain come, let the rain fall:
Oh, the sun shines all day.
I am always dreaming of my husband.
My head is heavy, my heart is breaking.

Where shall I find the day lily
To plant in the north of my house?
In grief I dream of my husband:
My heart is forlorn.

Two Prose Poems on the Red Cliff (1082)
First Prose Poem

55 In the autumn of the year *jen-hsü*, the seventh month, when the moon had just passed its prime, a friend and I went out in a small boat to amuse ourselves at the foot of the Red Cliff.[1] A fresh breeze blew softly across the water, leaving the waves unruffled. As I picked up the wine jar and poured a drink for my friend, I hummed a poem to the moon and sang a phrase on its strange beauty.

In a little while, the moon rose from the eastern hills and wandered across the sky between the Archer and the Goat. White dew settled over the river, and its shining surface reached to the sky. Letting the boat go where it pleased, we drifted over the immeasurable fields of water. I felt a boundless exhilaration, as though I were sailing on the void or riding the wind and didn't know where to stop. I was filled with a lightness, as though I had left the world and were standing alone, or had sprouted wings and were flying up to join the immortals. As I drank the wine, my delight increased and, thumping the edge of the boat, I composed a song that went:

With cassia sweep and
Oars of orchid wood,
Strike the empty moon,

[1] A steep escarpment overlooking the Yangtze near Huang-chou. Su Tung-p'o wrote these two pieces in the *fu* or prose poem style in the fall and early winter of 1082 to commemorate two outings to the spot.

Row through its drifting light.
Thoughts fly far away—
I long for my loved one
In a corner of the sky.

My friend began to play on an open flute, following my song and harmonizing with it. The flute made a wailing sound, as though the player were filled with resentment or longing, or were lamenting or protesting. Long notes trailed through the night like endless threads of silk, a sound to make dragons dance in hidden caves, or to set the widow weeping in her lonely boat.

Saddened by his playing, I straightened my robe, bowed and asked, "What makes you play this way?"

He replied,

"'The moon is bright, stars grow few,
Crows and magpies fly to the south.'

That's how Ts'ao Ts'ao's poem goes, doesn't it?[2] There you can see Hsia-k'ou to the west, Wu-ch'ang to the east. A dense tangle of dark green, bounded by mountains and river—this is the very spot where the young Chou Yü swooped down on Ts'ao Ts'ao, isn't it? After Ts'ao Ts'ao

[2] The lines are quoted from a poem in *yüeh-fu* style (*Wen hsüan* 27) written by Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220), military dictator of the region of Wei. Su's friend then goes on to recall Ts'ao Ts'ao's famous battle with his rivals, Liu Pei, Sun Ch'üan, Chou Yü, and others. The battle took place in A.D. 208, at a spot on the Yangtze called Red Cliff, and resulted in a disastrous defeat for Ts'ao Ts'ao. Because of its fame, many other spots on the Yangtze came to be called Red Cliff; the one where the poet and his friend are spending the evening is not the actual site of the battle but is considerably farther down the river.

had conquered Ching and taken Chiang-ling, he sailed down the Yangtze to the east. The stems and sterns of his ships touched for a thousand miles, and his flags and pennants blocked out the sky. He drank wine overlooking the river, laid his lance across the saddle, and wrote his poems. Surely he was the greatest hero of his time—yet where is he now?

"What then of you and me? Fishermen and wood gatherers by the banks of streams, companions to fish and crayfish, friends of deer and elk, riding this leaf of a boat, dipping gourds into the wine jar and pouring for each other—we are no more than summer flies between heaven and earth, a grain of millet on the waste of the sea! It grieves me that life is so short, and I envy the long river that never stops. If we could only link arms with the flying immortals and wander where we please, embrace the moon and grow old with it. . . . But I know that such hopes cannot quickly be fulfilled, and so I confide these lingering notes to the sad air."

I asked, "Do you know how it is with the water and the moon? 'The water flows on and on like this,'[8] but somehow it never flows away. The moon waxes and wanes, and yet in the end it's the same moon. If we look at things through the eyes of change, then there's not an instant of stillness in all creation. But if we observe the changelessness of things, then we and all beings alike have no end. What is there to be envious about?

[8] A quotation from *Analects* IX, 16: "The Master was standing by a river and said, 'The water flows on and on like this, never stopping day or night.'"

"Moreover, everything in the world has its owner, and if a thing doesn't belong to us, we don't dare take a hair of it. Only the clear breeze over the river, or the bright moon between the hills, which our ears hear as music, our eyes see beauty in—these we may take without prohibition, these we may make free with and they will never be used up. These are the endless treasures of the Creator, here for you and me to enjoy together!"

My friend was pleased and, laughing, washed the wine cups and filled them up again. But the fruit and other things we had brought to eat were all gone and so, among the litter of cups and bowls, we lay down in a heap in the bottom of the boat, unaware that the east was already growing light.

56 This same year, on the fifteenth day of the tenth month, I was walking back from Snow Hall to my home at Lin-kao.[1] Two friends were with me, and we went by way of Yellow Mud Slope. Frost had already fallen and the trees were bare of leaves. Our shadows appeared on the ground, and looking up, we saw that the moon had risen. Glancing around to enjoy the sight, we walked along singing songs back and forth.

After a while, I sighed and said, "Here I have guests and there's no wine! And even if I had some wine, there's nothing to eat with it. A clear moon, a fresh breeze—what will we do with such a fine night?"

"Today at sundown," said one of my friends, "I put out a net and caught some fish with big mouths and delicate scales, like the perch of Pine River. And there must be somewhere we can get some wine. . . ."

As soon as I got home, I consulted my wife. "I have a gallon of wine that's been put away for a long time," she said. "I was saving it for some occasion when you might suddenly need it."

So we took the wine and fish and went for another trip to the foot of the Red Cliff. The river raced along noisily, its sheer banks rising a thousand feet: The moun-

[1] Snow Hall was a small house on Eastern Slope which the poet built early in 1083 and where he sometimes stayed, though his wife and family continued to live in the house at Lin-kao. He completed it just at the time of a heavy snow, hence the name.

tains were very high, the moon small. The level of the water had fallen, leaving boulders sticking out. How much time had passed since my last visit? I couldn't recognize them as the same river and hills!

Tucking up my robe, I began to climb, picking my way along the steep embankment, pushing through tangled grass, straddling rocks the shape of tigers, clambering over roots twisted like dragons. I pulled my way up to the eagle's precarious nest, and looked down into the hidden halls of the river god. My two friends couldn't keep up.

I gave a long, shrill whoop. Trees and grass shook and swayed, the mountains rang, the valley echoed. A wind came up, roiling the water, and I felt a chill of sadness, a shrinking fear. I knew with a shudder that I couldn't stay there any longer.

I went back to my friends and got into the boat, and we turned it loose to drift with the current, content to let it stop wherever it chose. The night was half over and all around was deserted and still, when a lone crane appeared, cutting across the river from the east. Its wings looked like cart wheels, and it wore a black robe and a coat of white silk. With a long, grating cry, it swooped over our boat and went off to the west.

Soon afterwards, I left my friends and went to bed. I dreamed I saw a Taoist immortal in a feather robe come bouncing down the road past the foot of Lin-kao. He bowed to me and said, "Did you enjoy your outing to the Red Cliff?" I asked him his name, but he looked down and didn't answer.

"Ah, wait—of course—now I know! Last evening,

flying over our boat and crying—that was you, wasn't it?"

He turned his head and laughed, and I woke up with a start. I opened the door and peered out, but I could see no sign of him.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS
INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY*

From 1919 to 1923, Pa Chin (pronounced Ba Jin) wrote his most popular literary work, the trilogy Turbulent Stream, which consists of three novels: Family, Spring and Autumn. Pa Chin had a definite purpose in mind in writing this trilogy. As a revolutionary, he was opposed to the whole existing social and economic structure, but the trilogy was primarily aimed at the old family system. It was this aspect of the traditional society which weighed most heavily on young men and women of Pa Chin's social class, and which they regarded as the main enemy.

"I wanted to show how those families (typical families like those described in the trilogy) inevitably go down to ruin, how they dig their own graves with their own hands. I wanted to describe the inner struggles and tragedies inside those families...how lovable youths suffer there, how they struggle and finally do not escape destruction. At the end I wanted to describe a rebel, a young but courageous rebel. I wanted him to bring fresh air to us...In those families we do not have much fresh air."

When Pa Chin began to write he had his own family in mind, for there his eyes were first opened to the inequities of the old order. But as he says: "I did not want simply to write the history of our family. What I wanted to write had to be the history of a typical feudal family. Its main characters had to be those whom we constantly saw in such families." He drew the prototypes for almost all his characters from real people whom he had actually met, but those prototypes served only as starting points for the development of the characters in the novels...

In portraying old China and the new tide rising to destroy it the trilogy shows both the strong resistance of the old and the strength of the new, of the "turbulent stream that is constantly in movement...There is nothing that can stop it."

In the center of the story is the rich Kao (pronounced Gao, rhymes with "how") family, which belongs to the landlord-official class, and which also owns shares in business enterprises in the city. One of the main characters of the trilogy is Pa Chin's alter ego, Third Brother, a high school student about eighteen years old. The family head, Old Master Kao, Third Brother's grandfather, has under his rule a large family consisting of his concubine, the widow and children of his deceased eldest son (Third Brother's father) and his three younger sons, their wives and children. (This is the Confucian ideal of four generations under one roof.)

The city in which the action takes place is easily reco-gnized as Chengtu (pronounced Chungdew) in the years from 1919 to about 1923. Pa Chin vividly describes the events of the civil war, and also gives a broad picture of the youth movement of the time: demonstrations, school strikes, secret meetings, and literary activities. Principally, however, the trilogy deals with family life, and provides a rich source of information on the mores and inner relationships which characterized the upper-class Chinese family in this period of transition.

The plot of Family encompasses three principal events: the first is the tragic fate of Eldest Brother; the second is the tragic story of the servant girl, Ming-feng, who is in love with her master; the third event is the most important and dramatic episode of the novel, the revolt of the younger Kao brothers.

---

* Adapted from Pa Chin and His Writings: Chinese Youth Between Two Revolutions, by Olga Lang

Excerpt from *Family*: "Eldest Brother, the Brother Who Didn't Rebel"

In the large Kao family, Eldest Brother was the eldest son of an eldest son, and for that reason his destiny was fixed from the moment he came into the world. Handsome and intelligent, Eldest Brother was his father's favorite. His private tutor also spoke highly of him. People predicted that he would do big things, and his parents considered themselves fortunate to be blessed with such a son.

Brought up with loving care, after studying with a private tutor for a number of years, Eldest Brother entered middle school. One of the school's best students, he graduated four years later at the top of his class. He was very interested in physics and chemistry and hoped to go on to a university in Shanghai or Peking, or perhaps study abroad, in Germany. His mind was full of beautiful dreams. At that time he was the envy of his classmates.

But then, one day, his dreams were shattered. The evening he returned home carrying his diploma, the praise of his teachers and friends still ringing in his ears, his father called him into his room and said:

"Now that you've graduated, I want to arrange your marriage. Your grandfather is looking forward to having a great-grandson, and I, too, would like to be able to hold a grandson in my arms. You're old enough to be married; I won't feel easy until I fulfill my obligation to find you a wife. I've already arranged a match with the Li family. The thirteenth of next month is a good day. We'll announce the engagement then. You can be married within the year..."

The blow was too sudden. Although he understood everything his father said, somehow the meaning didn't fully register. Eldest Brother did not utter a word of protest, nor did such a thought occur to him. He merely nodded to indicate his compliance with his father's wishes. But after he returned to his own room, and shut the door, he threw himself down on his bed, covered his head with the quilt and wept. He wept for his broken dreams.

Yes, he had dreamed of romance. The one girl in his heart was Mei, who understood him and who could comfort him. At one time he was sure she would be his future mate, and he had congratulated himself that this would be so.

He was deeply in love with Mei, but now his father had chosen another, a girl he had never seen, and said that he must marry within the year. What's more, his hopes of continuing his studies had burst like a buble. But he did not fight back, he never thought of resisting.

After his engagement, Eldest Brother drifted aimlessly from day to day. He stacked his books neatly in the bookcase and didn't look at them again. He played mahjong, went to the opera, drank and went about making the necessary preparations for his marriage, in accordance with his father's instructions. He thought very little. He calmly awaited the arrival of his bride.

In less than six months, she came. To celebrate the marriage, the Kao family had a stage specially built for the performance of theatricals in the compound.

The marriage ceremony turned out to be not as simple as Eldest Brother had anticipated. He too, in effect, became an actor, and he had to perform for three days before he was able to obtain his bride. He was manipulated like a puppet, and he was displayed as a treasure or rare worth. He was neither happy nor sad - he was only tired...

Eldest Brother was now married. His grandfather had obtained a grand-daughter-in-law, his father had obtained a daughter-in-law, and others had enjoyed a brief period of merry-making. The marriage was by no means a total loss for Eldest Brother either. He had joined in wedlock a tender, sympathetic girl, just as pretty as the one he adored. He was satisfied.

One evening his father called him into his room and said:

"Now that you're married you should be earning your own living, or people will talk. I've raised you to manhood and found you a wife. I think we can say that I've fulfilled my duties as a father. From now on you must take care of yourself. We have enough money to send you to a university, down-river, to study, but in the first place, you already have a wife; secondly, the family property has not yet been shared out among me and my

"The Brother Who Didn't Rebel" (page 2)

brothers, and I am in charge of hte accounts. It would look like favoritism if I advanced money from the family funds for your university education. Besides, your grandfather might not agree. So I've found you a position in the West Szechuan Mercantile Corporation. The salary's not large, but it will give you and your wife a little spending money. Moreover, if you do your work diligently, you're sure to advance. You start tomorrow. I'll take you down there myself. Our family owns some shares in the company and several of the directors are my friends. They'll look after you."

Eldest Brother listened, and consented. He didn't say whether he was willing or unwilling. There was only one thought in his mind -- "Everything is finished." Though he had many words in his heart, he spoke not a one.

Excerpt from *Family*: "The Emancipation of Chin"

This story takes place in the 1920s. Chin (pronounced like "Gin") comes from a large upper class family living in Shanghai.

"Ma," Chin began. Her voice trembled a bit with excitement.

"What is it?"

"Ma," Chin said again. Head down, she toyed with the edge of her jacket. She spoke slowly. "Cousin Kao says next year their school will be accepting girl students. I'd like to take the entrance exam."

"What are you saying? Girl students in a boys' school? You want to go there?" Mrs. Chang couldn't believe her ears.

"Yes," Chin replied timidly. She explained, "There's nothing wrong with it. Peking University already has three girl students. Co-ed schools have been started in Nanking and Shanghai."

"What is the world coming to? It isn't enough to have schools for girls, now they want to have co-ed schools too!" Mrs. Chang sighed. "When I was a girl, I never dreamed there would be such things!"

These words struck Chin like cold water. Chilled and dazed, she stood in silence. But she refused to give up hope. Slowly, her courage returned. She said:

"Ma, times have changed. After all, it's more than twenty years since you were my age; something new comes into the world every day. Girls are human beings the same as boys. Why shouldn't they study in the same classroom?"

Mrs. Chang interrupted with a laugh: "I won't try to argue the merits of the case; I'd never be able to outtalk you. I'm sure you can find lots of reasons in those new books of yours to use against me. You probably think I'm reactionary."

Chin laughed too, then she pleaded, "Let me go, Ma. You usually trust me. You've never refused me anything!"

Mrs. Chang weakened a little. "And I've taken a good deal of abuse for that very reason," she sighed. "But I'm not afraid of gossip, and I do trust you. No matter what it's been, I've always done what you wanted...But this thing is too special. Your grandmother will be the first to oppose. Surely you don't want me to fall out with her because of this? And of course all our relatives will be sure to talk. Don't you remember what they all said when I let you enter the Provincial Normal School for Girls? 'A big girl like her,' they said, 'out on the street every day; what will people think! What well-brought-up young lady would ever act like that?'"

"Didn't you just say you're not afraid of gossip?" Chin retorted. "Grandma visits us only once a month, and then only stays two or three days. Besides, who cares what she says? Since she usually doesn't concern herself with family affairs, you can decide. Our relatives won't have any reason to oppose. If they want to gossip, we'll just ignore them."

After a long silence, Mrs. Chang said in a deflated voice, "I used to be brave, but I'm old now. I don't want to be the butt of any more idle chatter by our relatives. I want to live in peace another few years, without any trouble. You know I've been a devoted mother to you. Your father died when you were very young, leaving me with the full burden of bringing you up. I never bound your feet like other young girls. I let you study with your cousins' private tutor at your Grandfather Kao's house. Later, in spite of everthing, I sent you to a girls' school. Your cousin Shu-chen has tiny bound feet, and she can barely read. On the whole, you must admit I've treated you pretty well."

Mrs. Chang was too weary to go on. But when she saw that Chin was on the point of tears, her heart went out to the girl and she said kindly:

"Go to sleep, Chin dear. It's late. We can talk again about what will happen next autumn some other time. I'll do my best for you."

"Emancipation of Chin" (page 2)

With a murmur of assent, the disappointed Chin walked out, crossed the small hall, and went to her own room. Although downcast, she did not blame her mother, in fact she was grateful for her mother's affection.

Chin's room was dreary, as if devoid of all hope. Chin felt her eyes grow damp. She took off her skirt and laid it on the bed, then walked over to the desk, turned up the lamp and sat down. Picking up a *New Youth* magazine, she idly thumbed through a few pages. The following words caught her eye:

"...I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are---or at least that I should try to become one...I cannot be satisfied with what most people say...I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them..."

Lines from Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*

To her they were a revelation, and her eyes grew bright. She saw clearly that her desire was not hopeless, that it all depended on her own efforts. In other words, there was still hope, and the fulfillment of that hope rested with her, not with others.

With this realization, her despair melted away, and she cheerfully picked up her pen and wrote this letter to a classmate of hers:

> Today my cousins told me that the Foreign Language School has decided to accept girl students beginning next fall. I am determined to take the entrance exam. What about you? Would you like to go with me?
> I hope you are willing to take the plunge. We have to fight, no matter what the cost, to open a road for sisters who come after us.
>
> Chin

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHINESE LITERATURE

Suggestions for Further Reading

The gap left by the omission of historical and philosophical literature can be filled by consulting Sources of Chinese Tradition, Wm. Theodore DeBary and others, editors; Columbia University Press (New York, 1960). Volume one covers the classics through Neo-Confucianism and is available in paperback. The book includes excerpts from the works with excellent introductions for first-time readers.

A good general collection of literary poetry and prose is the two volume Anthology of Chinese Literature, Cyril Birch, editor; Grove Press, Inc. (New York, 1972). It goes from the earliest period through modern times. This unit has also made liberal use of Liu Wu-chih's An Introduction to Chinese Literature, Indiana University Press,(Bloomington, 1966). A more recent anthology for those interested only in poetry is Sunflower Splendor, Liu Wu-chih and Irving Yucheng Lo, editors; Indiana University Press (Bloomington, 1975).

For excerpts from all the Chinese novels mentioned, see Chinese Literature: An Anthology from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, William McNaughton, editor; Charles E. Tuttle Company (Rutland, Vt., 1974). We would still recommend concentrating on one novel, however, especially Monkey, Arthur Waley, translator, Grove Press, Inc., (Garden City, N.Y., 1958). A single episode is translated in the Birch anthology. Dream of the Red Chamber is available in a translation by Chi-Chen Wang (the novel is by Tsao Hsueh-chin), Doubleday Anchor Books,

(Garden City, New York; 1958). A more detailed introduction to the novels can be found in C.T. Hsia, The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction, Columbia University Press, (New York, 1968).

A thorough collection of contemporary (post-1949) Chinese literature can be found in Literature of the People's Republic of China, Kai-yu Hsu, editor, Indiana University Press (Bloomington, 1980). A shorter paperback introduction is Mr. Hsu's The Chinese Literary Scene: A Writer's Visit to the People's Republic, Vintage Books (New York, 1975). The problem with the book is that it is written after the Cultural Revolution and before the fall of the Gang of Four, a ten year period now rejected completely by the Chinese.

The best introduction to pre-revolutionary modern Chinese literature might be Silent China: Selected Writings of Lu Xun, Gladys Yang, editor and translator, Oxford University Press (London and New York, 1973). This includes the fiction, poetry and essays of China's greatest writer, and Yang's translations are excellent. A broader taste of mid-twentieth century writings can be found in Modern Chinese Stories, Selected and edited by W.J.F. Jenner, Oxford University Press (London and New York, 1970).

If you read Dream of the Red Chamber, an interesting novel for comparison is Family by Pa Chin (Ba Jin, or Li Fei-kan), published in translation by Anchor Books, Garden City, N.Y., 1972. Like Dream, Family centers on a large gentry family, but it takes

place in the turmoil of twentieth century China. It is the most popular Chinese novel of this century.

These books may be difficult to find in local bookstores and school libraries. If you find a book you think might be useful and more easily available, let us know, and we will try to give you our opinion.